

Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act Grants Program

Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Florida, Mexico

Binational Partnership Receives a \$33,328 Conservation Grant.

On May 3, 2004, as authorized under the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act (Act), Steve Williams, Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, acting on behalf of Secretary of the Interior Gale Norton, approved \$33,328 in funding for the Gulf Crossings Technical Assistance Project, located in Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida. Project partners also will be carrying out activities in Mexico to complement and further advance the conservation goals of this binational project. The Act is nonregulatory and calls for voluntary partnerships to develop initiatives in the United States, Latin America, and the Caribbean to conserve neotropical migratory birds and their habitats. Certain activities defined by the Act are eligible for funding, and partnerships must match grant requests 3:1. Contributions from U.S. federal partners do not qualify as match.

Coastal ecosystems, particularly in and around the Gulf Coast of Mexico, offer some of the most important habitats to migrating birds. In response to ongoing loss and degradation of gulf habitats and other threats to bird populations, Gulf Coast Bird Observatory (GCBO) developed the "Gulf Crossings" program, which facilitates conservation activities at 47 sites, to date, in the United States and Mexico. Some 27 organizations, called Site Partners, are involved. Site Partners need more on-site, technical assistance from GCBO; a coordinated communications plan and programwide outreach products; and training in fundraising to help them build self-sustaining operations.

To this end, and to the benefit of all sites within the program's region, project partners will create a new Conservation Science Director position at GCBO. He/she will provide programwide planning and direction, strengthen and expand partnerships, and help give technical assistance to Site Partners.

Project partners will host training seminars designed to provide Site Partners with outreach, marketing, fundraising, and ecotourism skills. Partners also will publish a comprehensive, bilingual sourcebook containing general program information and site-specific details, which will double as an outreach tool and visitors' guide. A plan will be developed for increasing ecotourism throughout the site network.

Gulf Coast Bird Observatory, Inc., Meadows Foundation, Houston Endowment, and National Fish and Wildlife Foundation's Shell Marine Habitat Fund are contributing \$268,905 to this project. All 27 Site Partners will participate in advancing project goals.

The project area spans 15 ecoregions and six bird conservation regions.

In Texas

A total of 27 sites are located across 14 counties in Congressional Districts 2, 9, 14, 15, 22, 27, and 29.

In Louisiana

St. Tammany, Jefferson, and Cameron Parishes host a total of three sites in Congressional Districts 1, 3, and 7.

In Mississippi

The Hancock County Marsh site is located in Hancock County in Congressional District 4.

In Alabama

Mobile County, in Congressional District 1, is the location of the Dauphin Island Bird Sanctuaries' site.

In Florida

The Reliant Energy Osceola site is in Osceola County in Congressional District 5.

In Mexico

A total of 14 sites occur throughout five Mexican states. *Tamaulipas*: Barra del Tordo, Laguna Madre, and Rancho Rincon de Anacahuillas. *Veracruz*:



Nell Baltacino/UFW

Prothonotary Warbler

Centro de Investigaciones Costeras La Mancha, Humedales Alvarado, Rio de Rapaces, and Selva Zoque. *Campeche*: Reserva de la Biosfera Calakmul. *Yucatán*: Reserva de la Biosfera Ria Lagartos, Reserva Ecologica Municipal Cuxtal, and Reserva Especial de la Biosfera Ria Celestun. *Quintana Roo*: Parque Nacional Isla Contoy, Reserva de la Biosfera Banco Chinchorro, and Reserva de la Biosfera Sian Ka'an.

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Division of Bird Habitat Conservation
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